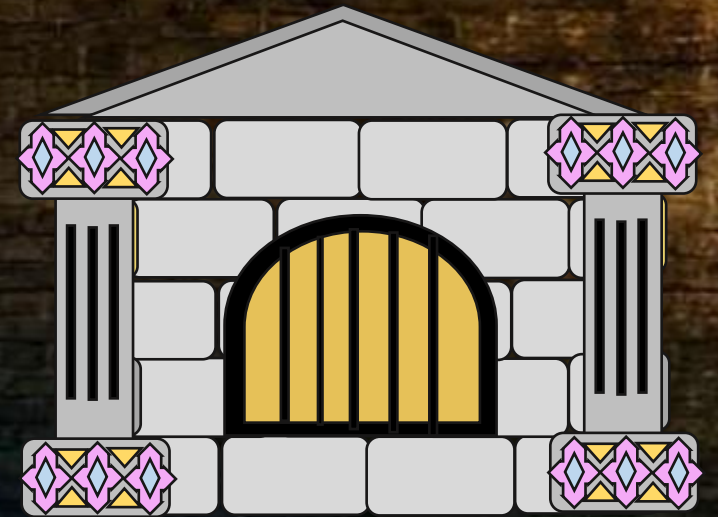


Spiritual Blessings in Heavenly Places

Ephesians 1



Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:
Ephesians 1:3



Ephesus

The city was the site of a famous temple for the fertility goddess Diana. Paul was successful in turning the people away from their idols.

Paul concentrated on turning people from idol worship to worship of Jesus Christ.

Craftsmen of the city saw a threat to the sale of their pagan statues.



For about 3 years Ephesus was a central point for Paul's ministry.

Paul was under house arrest (prisoner) in Rome while he wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians... However he was able to preach and receive visitors.

This may have been his first imprisonment in Rome.

Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20

Ephesus-Modern Day Türkiye

Ephesus was an important city in western Asia Minor. (Turkey changed it's spelling to Türkiye officially in 2021)

Major trade routes was a center for commercial trade.



According to Christian tradition, Mary, the mother of Jesus, spent the remaining years of her life at Ephesus under John's care (see John 19:27).

Ephesus was the first of the seven cities that John wrote to in the book of Revelation.

Following Peter's death, John the Revelator became the President of the Church, and when John moved from Jerusalem to Ephesus, the headquarters of the Church also moved to Ephesus.

Paul may not have written the epistle specifically to the Ephesians but to several churches in the region. Paul's headquarters during his third missionary journey.



The Saint

Paul frequently referred to Church members as “saints.”

“*Saint* is a translation of a Greek word also rendered ‘holy,’ the fundamental idea being that of consecration or separation for a sacred purpose.

By referring to members of the Church as Saints, Paul was teaching that every follower of Jesus Christ is made holy—set apart from the world—through the Atonement and should therefore strive to be a holy person.



Predestinated



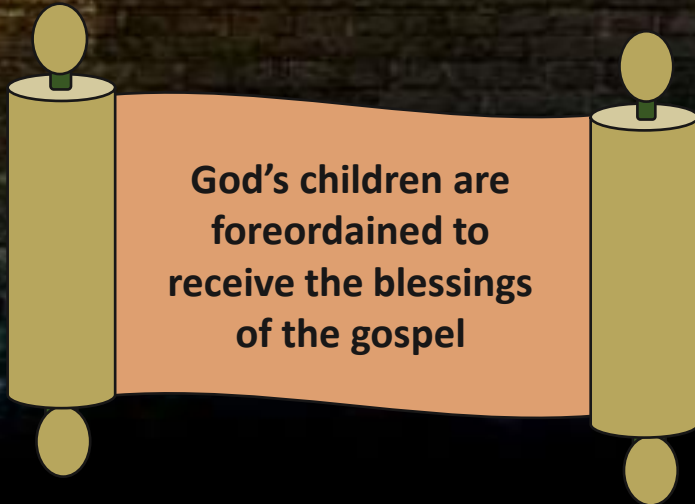
The adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself

Ephesians contains the only passages in the New Testament that use the phrase translated as "heavenly places" to refer to multiple realms in heaven.



"...many of the noble and valiant spirits of the pre-existence have been withheld as to birth into mortality until this particular time that they may be here upon the earth, either born under the covenant or converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ, that there will be strength within the Church to fulfill the divine commitments which the Lord has placed upon us as a people.

These choice spirits so withheld, as could be expected, respond more readily to the gospel message here in life when they hear it." (3)



God's children are
foreordained to
receive the blessings
of the gospel

Premortal Spirit World

“In the premortal spirit world, God appointed certain spirits to fulfill specific missions during their mortal lives. This is called foreordination.

“Foreordination does not guarantee that individuals will receive certain callings or responsibilities. Such opportunities come in this life as a result of the righteous exercise of agency, just as foreordination came as a result of righteousness in the premortal existence. ...



“The doctrine of foreordination applies to all members of the Church, not just to the Savior and His prophets. Before the creation of the earth, faithful women were given certain responsibilities and faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood duties. Although you do not remember that time, you surely agreed to fulfill significant tasks in the service of your Father. As you prove yourself worthy, you will be given opportunities to fulfill the assignments you then received.” (4)

High Priests called because of faith

“And his is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God...

...on account of their exceeding faith and good works;



...in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith are called with a holy calling...”

Abraham learns of pre-earth life

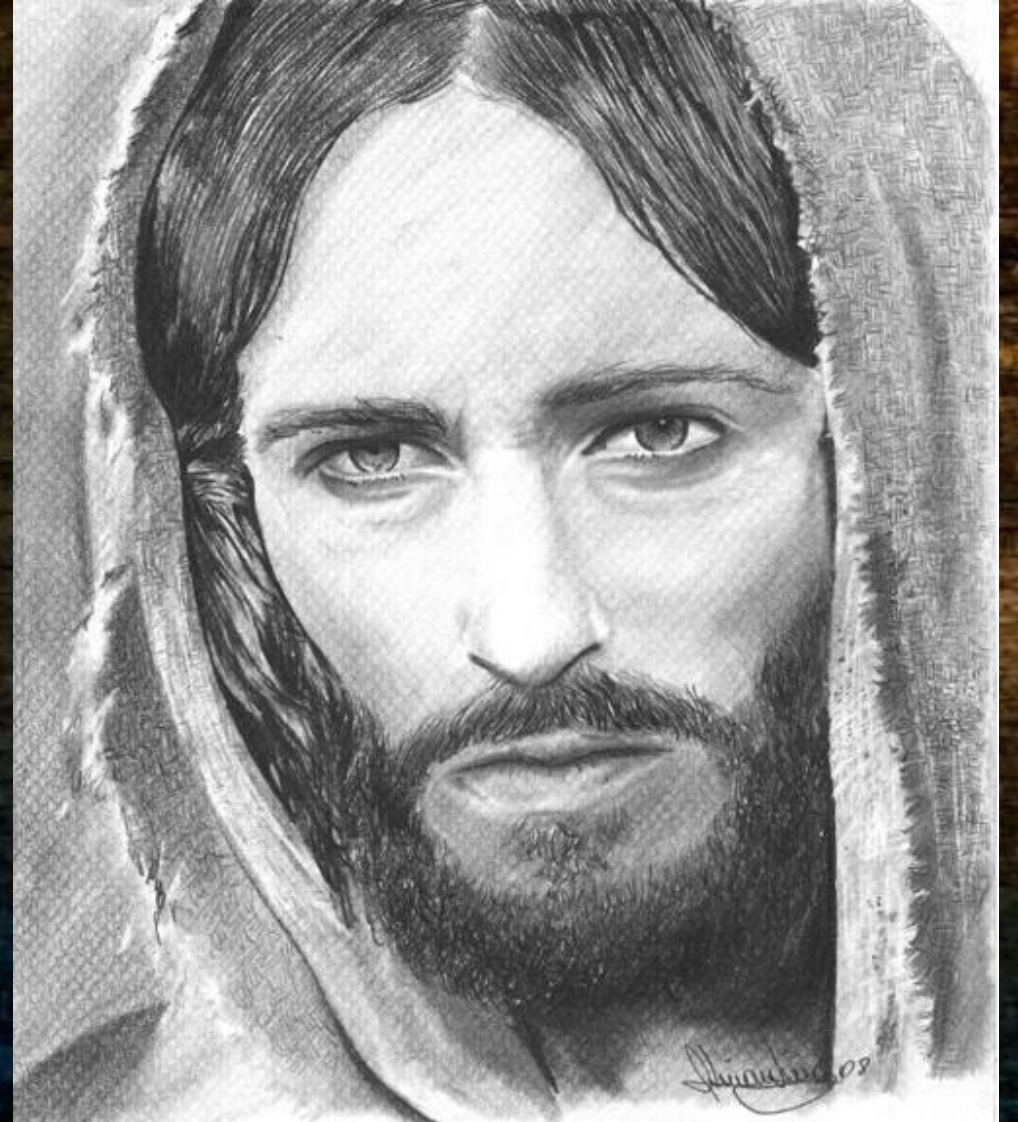
“And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said:...



...These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he saith unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.”

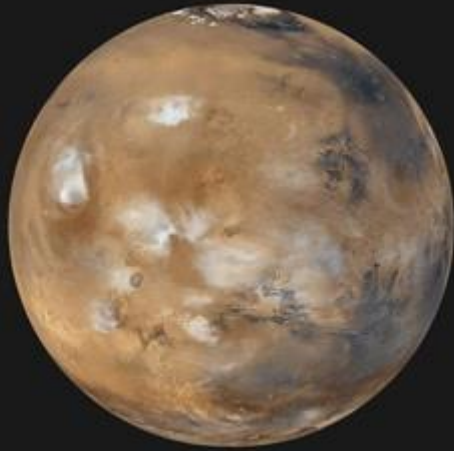
Jesus is Chosen

“But, behold, my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me— Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.”



How Does That Apply to Us?

Have you ever wondered why you were born at this time and this place?



Do you think you were foreordained to do something special for Heavenly Father?



Why Did We Have to Forget?



A forgetfulness separates premortal life from earth life.

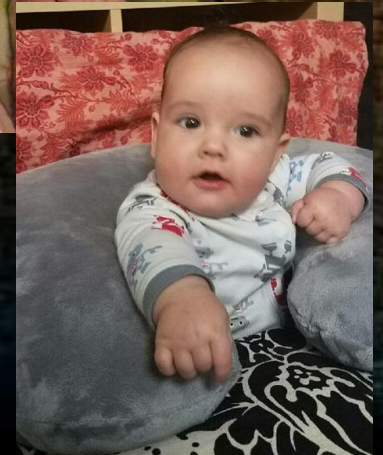
Some people have difficulty understanding that their existence before this earth life could be forgotten.



Because we do not recall the first few years of early childhood does not mean that we didn't exist, that we didn't eat, play, laugh, and interact with family and friends. So it is with our premortal estate.



We lived and associated, grew and learned; yet we cannot recall those former activities for reasons that the Lord in His eternal wisdom **has not fully revealed to us.**



Remembering VS Not Knowing

If you could remember what it was like before you came to earth do you think you would live differently or the same?

We may not know many details about our individual premortal existence.



“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;”

Fore---before

Premortal Selection



God's premortal selection of His valiant spirit children to fulfill certain missions during their mortal lives.

Ordained--



"...because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

"Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was.

I suppose I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council." (8)



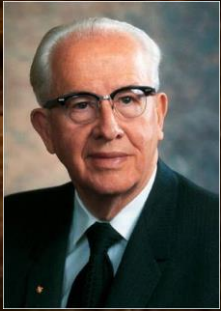
What About Me?

Do I have a foreordained calling?

As you serve faithfully in the church, Heavenly Father will place us where we need to be in order to fulfill our foreordained callings.



Valiant Servants



“Our Heavenly Father foreordained certain valiant spirit children and assigned them to come to earth at specific times and places to fulfill their appointments.”



“Other good and valiant spirits were foreappointed to lay the foundation for man’s liberty through their service in political matter.

What were you
foreordained to do?



Dispensation of The Fulness of Times

Paul taught that God would “gather together in one all things in Christ” during the dispensation of the fulness of times.



“A dispensation of the gospel is a period of time in which the Lord has at least one authorized servant on the earth who bears the holy priesthood and the keys, and who has a divine commission to dispense the gospel to the inhabitants of the earth.

When this occurs, the gospel is revealed anew so that people of that dispensation do not have to depend basically on past dispensations for knowledge of the plan of salvation.

There have been many gospel dispensations since the beginning. (2)



Doctrinal Mastery

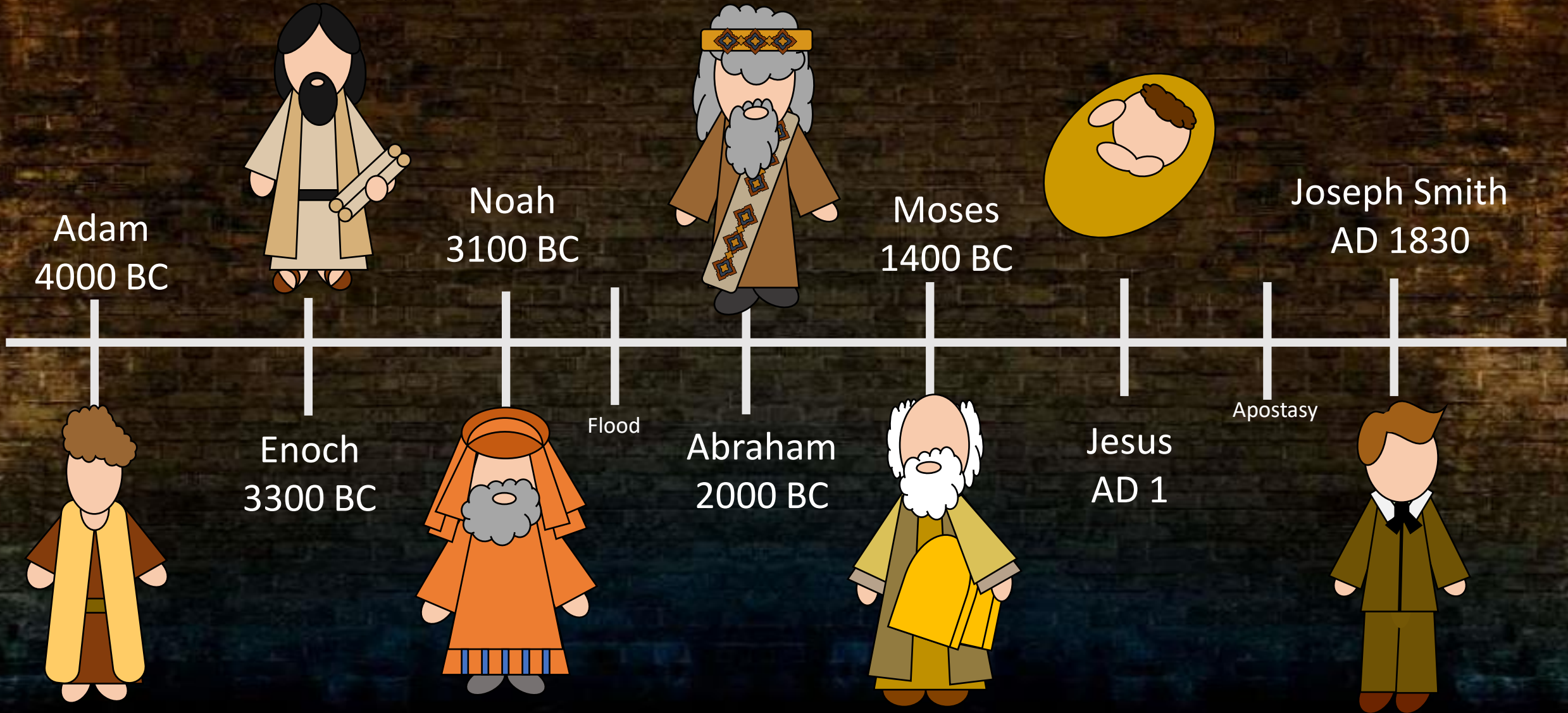
Ephesians

1:10



That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

Dispensation of the Fulness of Times



The Bible suggests at least one dispensation identified with Adam, another with Enoch, another with Noah, and so on with Abraham, Moses, and Jesus with His Apostles in the meridian of time"

The 7th Dispensation

The seventh dispensation, in which we live, is the last dispensation which will not fall into an apostasy but will eventually be completed with the coming of Christ.

After restoring His priesthood authority to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said:



"Unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth" (D&C 27:13).

During the dispensation of the fulness of times, all things from former dispensations will be restored



“This is the dispensation of the fullness of times, and we see running into it, as mighty streams rush into the ocean, all the former dispensations, putting us in touch with them, putting them in touch with us; and we see that God has had but one great purpose in view from the beginning, and that has been the salvation of His children.

And now has come the final day, the final dispensation, when truth and light and righteousness must flood the earth.”

Trickle Into A Flood



“My beloved brothers and sisters, what has been accomplished thus far in this dispensation communicating gospel messages through social media channels is a good beginning—but only a small trickle.

I now extend to you the invitation to help transform the trickle into a flood...



...I exhort you to sweep the earth with messages filled with righteousness and truth—messages that are authentic, edifying, and praiseworthy—and literally to sweep the earth as with a flood.”

To Be Trusted --Responsibilities

Heavenly Father foreordained some of His children to receive certain responsibilities and blessings on this earth.



We receive these blessings according to our faithfulness.

The Holy Spirit of Promise

The Holy Ghost “witnesses to the Father that the saving ordinances have been performed properly and that the covenants associated with them have been kept.”



The Spirit is “the earnest of our inheritance.”

The presence of the Holy Ghost in our lives is a token, reminder, and indication from God that if we continue faithful we will receive eternal life.

The Spirit of Revelation

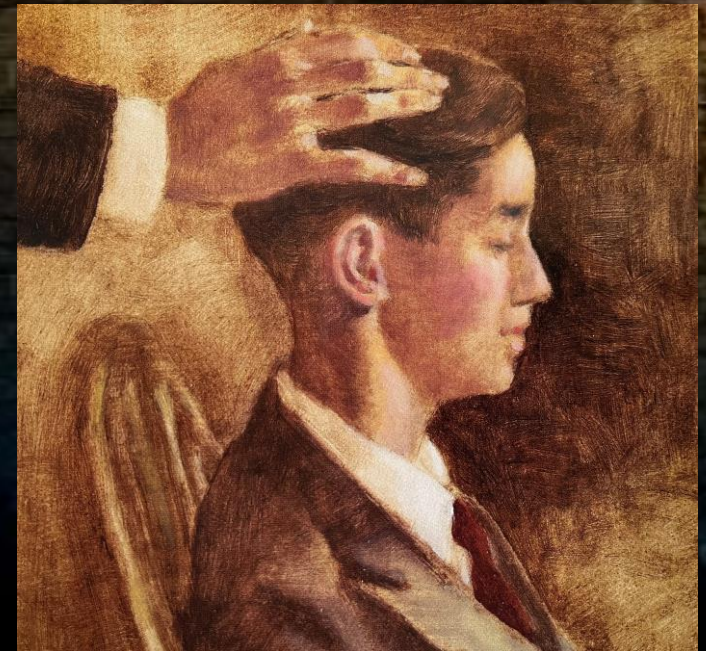


“Revelation is communication from God to His children on the earth and one of the great blessings associated with the gift and constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.”



‘The Holy Ghost is a revelator,’ and ‘no man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations’ (8)

“The spirit of revelation is available to every person who receives by proper priesthood authority the saving ordinances of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost—and who is acting in faith to fulfill the priesthood injunction to ‘receive the Holy Ghost.’”



It is left for us [in the latter days] to see, participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory, 'the dispensation of the fullness of times, when God will gather together all things that are in heaven, and all things that are upon the earth, even in one' ...

[This is] a work that God and angels have contemplated with delight for generations past; that fired the souls of the ancient patriarchs and prophets; a work that is destined to bring about the destruction of the powers of darkness, the renovation of the earth, the glory of God, and the salvation of the human family.”

(8)



Sources:

1. New Testament Institute Student Manual Chapter 44
2. Bible Dictionary
3. Alvin R. Dyer (*Conference Report, April 1962*, First Day-Morning Meeting 10.)
4. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 69–70).
5. Elder B.H. Roberts (in Conference Report, Oct. 1904, 73).
6. Elder David A. Bednar (“To Sweep the Earth as with a Flood” [Brigham Young University Campus Education Week devotional, Aug. 19, 2014], LDS.org). (“The Spirit of Revelation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 87).
7. Chapter 6: Our Premortal Life *Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual*, (2000), 13–15
8. Prophet Joseph Smith “Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith” p 365. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 132; Page 513-15
9. Ezra Taft Benson “The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson” p. 21
10. “Guide to the Scriptures”

Saints Foreordained to Receive Gospel	1:1–8
Gospel to Be Restored in Last Days	1:9–12
Saints Sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise	1:13–14
The Godhead Is Known by Revelation	1:15–23

Life and Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles Chapter 43

Heavenly Places Ephesians 1:3:
In the latter days, the Lord revealed that heaven consists of three realms (see D&C 76:50–112; 88:14–47). Elsewhere Paul wrote about varying degrees of resurrected glory (see 1 Corinthians 15:40–42) and about his experience of being “caught up to the third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2). (1)

Dispensation Ephesians 1:9-11:
The dispensation of the fulness of times is a period of restoration and fulfillment of all the plans, purposes, and promises that God has revealed since the world began. It “will bring to light the things that have been revealed in all former dispensations; also other things that have not been before revealed. He shall send Elijah, the Prophet, etc., and restore all things in Christ” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 510–11).

“it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time” (D&C 128:18). The dispensation of the fulness of times is the final dispensation, which will prepare the earth for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Mystery of His Will Ephesians 1:9:
"Isn't that something to think about, when you hear that the Lord will reveal the mystery of His will? And that the mystery of His will has been revealed to His modern prophets of this day?
"And we have truths that no other church in this world knows anything about—we are the only church in the world that has a program to unite all that is in the kingdom of heaven with the kingdom of God here on this earth, looking to the final winding-up scenes when all the kingdoms of this world and the world to come will be under the supervision of our great King, the Savior of the world." ("God Moves in a Mysterious Way His Wonders to Perform," *Ensign*, May 1977, 62)

Heavenly Priesthood Ephesians 1:10:

"The heavenly priesthood will unite with the earthly to bring about those great purposes. And whilst we are thus united in the one common cause to roll forth the kingdom of God, the heavenly priesthood are not idle spectators. The spirit of God will be showered down from above; it will dwell in our midst. The blessings of the Most High will rest upon our tabernacles, and our name will be handed down to future ages. Our children will rise up and call us blessed, and generations yet unborn will dwell with peculiar delight upon the scenes that we have passed through, the privations that we have endured, the untiring zeal that we have manifested, the insurmountable difficulties that we have overcome in laying the foundation of a work that brought about the glory and blessings which they will realize, a work that God and angels have contemplated with delight for generations past, that fired the souls of the ancient patriarchs and prophets, a work that is destined to bring about the destruction of the powers of darkness, the renovation of the earth, the glory of God, and the salvation of the human family." Joseph Smith (Kent P. Jackson, *From Apostasy to Restoration* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1996], 258.)

Calling and Election Sure Ephesians 1:13-14:

"Paul exhorts us to make our calling and election sure. This is the sealing power spoken of by Paul in other places. 'In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory' ("Eph. 1:13"Eph. 1:14Eph. 1:13-14), that we may be sealed up unto the day of redemption.

"This principle ought (in its proper place) to be taught, for God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what he will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them, for the day must come when no man need say to his neighbor, Know ye the Lord; for all shall know him (*who remain*) from the least to the greatest. How is this to be done? It is to be done by this sealing power, and the other Comforter spoken of, which will be manifest by revelation. (HC 3:379-80.)" (*Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Alma P. Burton [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977], 150 - 151.)

Spirit of Revelation Ephesians 1:17:

"...those who possess the light of Christ, the spirit of revelation and the knowledge of God, rise above all these vagaries in the world; they know of this doctrine, that it is of God and not of man." Joseph F. Smith (*Conference Report, October 1909*, 8 - 9.)

The Restoration of the Fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

A Bicentennial Proclamation to the World

The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

This proclamation was read by President Russell M. Nelson as part of his message at the 190th Annual General Conference, April 5, 2020, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

We solemnly proclaim that God loves His children in every nation of the world. God the Father has given us the divine birth, the incomparable life, and the infinite atoning sacrifice of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. By the power of the Father, Jesus rose again and gained the victory over death. He is our Savior, our Exemplar, and our Redeemer. Two hundred years ago, on a beautiful spring morning in 1820, young Joseph Smith, seeking to know which church to join, went into the woods to pray near his home in upstate New York, USA. He had questions regarding the salvation of his soul and trusted that God would direct him.

In humility, we declare that in answer to his prayer, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph and inaugurated the “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21) as foretold in the Bible. In this vision, he learned that following the death of the original Apostles, Christ’s New Testament Church was lost from the earth. Joseph would be instrumental in its return.

We affirm that under the direction of the Father and the Son, heavenly messengers came to instruct Joseph and re-establish the Church of Jesus Christ. The resurrected John the Baptist restored the authority to baptize by immersion for the remission of sins. Three of the original twelve Apostles—Peter, James, and John—restored the apostleship and keys of priesthood authority. Others came as well, including Elijah, who restored the authority to join families together forever in eternal relationships that transcend death.

We further witness that Joseph Smith was given the gift and power of God to translate an ancient record: the Book of Mormon—Another Testament of Jesus Christ. Pages of this sacred text include an account of the personal ministry of Jesus Christ among people in the Western Hemisphere soon after His Resurrection. It teaches of life’s purpose and explains the doctrine of Christ, which is central to that purpose. As a companion scripture to the Bible, the Book of Mormon testifies that all human beings are sons and daughters of a loving Father in Heaven, that He has a divine plan for our lives, and that His Son, Jesus Christ, speaks today as well as in days of old.

We declare that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, organized on April 6, 1830, is Christ’s New Testament Church restored. This Church is anchored in the perfect life of its chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ, and in His infinite Atonement and literal Resurrection. Jesus Christ has once again called Apostles and has given them priesthood authority. He invites all of us to come unto Him and His Church, to receive the Holy Ghost, the ordinances of salvation, and to gain enduring joy.

Two hundred years have now elapsed since this Restoration was initiated by God the Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Millions throughout the world have embraced a knowledge of these prophesied events.

We gladly declare that the promised Restoration goes forward through continuing revelation. The earth will never again be the same, as God will “gather together in one all things in Christ” (Ephesians 1:10).

With reverence and gratitude, we as His Apostles invite all to know—as we do—that the heavens are open. We affirm that God is making known His will for His beloved sons and daughters. We testify that those who prayerfully study the message of the Restoration and act in faith will be blessed to gain their own witness of its divinity and of its purpose to prepare the world for the promised Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.